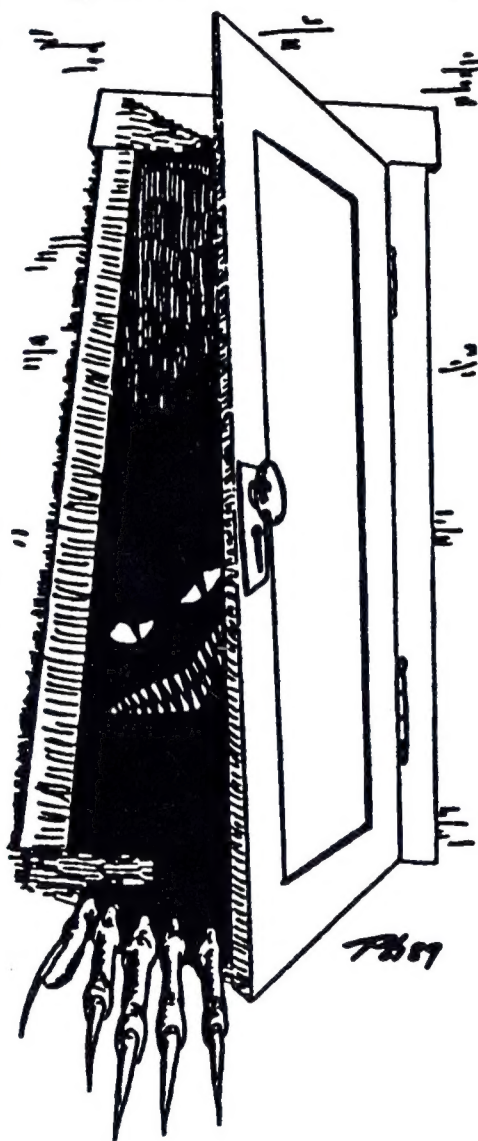


# HOUSE CARFAX

*Passage into Horror*

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***All  
New  
Fiction!***

**Horrors of  
Childhood**

**War**

**Family  
and**

**A Familiar  
Bloodsucker**

***PLUS***

**Poetry**

**Commentary**

**The New  
Vampires**

*Are they us?*

**Summer 1989**

**\$2.95**

**No. 3**



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## Welcome To Our HOUSE Who We Are and Why We're Here

### The Who of Us:

CARFAX - Name of London castle purchased by Count Dracula during his transition from his Transylvania home to the bright lights big city. According to Leonard Wolf's *Annotated Dracula*:

Carfax, no doubt a corruption of the old Quatre Face. Carfax Road was and is located in the far west of London, and Carfax Square in central London. Oxford Dictionary of Etymology gives 'Carfax: a place where four roads meet, especially as a proper name.'

We who publish the new HOUSE CARFAX are a direct descendant of Transylvania (through a father - no kidding), and a multi-generation Louisiana backwoods bayou baby who lived through voodoo and folk tales told by those who believed them. We are, in short, a genuine blood mix of the Old World and New World Horror tradition, and are dedicated to maintaining and replenishing that tradition through the blood of new Horror Fiction.

### The Why of Us:

"CARFAX: A place where four roads meet..." That's us, only here, our four roads are four stories that we hope will lead you the reader to the essence of Horror - the cold shiver, the insight, the human frailty it exposes, the relevance, and perhaps most important, the Possibility of the Improbable - which is, perhaps, the definition of true Horror. (Could we say then that Science Fiction is the Possibility of the Present Impossible, and Fantasy the Impossibility of the Impossible? Possibly.)

The more philosophical Why of Us is twofold - We're here to encourage, in our own small way, the growing stature of Horror as a legitimate, respectable kind of literature. To wit: More and more high schools and colleges are offering Horror movie/literature courses (criticism and writing), in recognition of the specific skill needed for just that genre. So that's one fold. The other fold is that Horror Needs Blood! Rich, red, pulsing rivers of blood. There's too many Stephen and Clive wanna-be's out there. Need new blood. Maybe your blood. If you can make the Undead glow with new vitality, send us your story!

So that's the Who and Why of HOUSE CARFAX. Come in and taste the What.



## HYDE AND GHOST CREEK

by David Munson

Come on  
Come on up through the Bay leaves  
Through the Manzanita berries  
Watch your late night step  
Over the twistily indecisive ravines  
Ravines that run beneath reaching boughs of Oak  
Let us ride up and up again  
If we go up enough  
But not up too much  
Beyond the poisonous beauty  
Concealed within a row of Oleanders  
We will find a small house -  
A small house on a big hill.

Inside this small house live four large-minded children who nightly ride the backs of phantoms twice the size of old T. Rex. Standing on the grey wood, redwood deck you can see the family gathered in the room where the warm hours are spent. This is the stage where the strange drama of the family is acted out nightly in chirps and screeches. This is the room of two couches and one table.

The Mother sits on the couch with a story on her lap. A story that reads back before even Adam and Eve. The children sit on each side of the Mother as she reads their favorite poem from Lewis Carroll. " 'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves..." The Father steps into the family room on the final line of the poem, "...All mimsy were the borogoves, and the mome raths outgrabe," with a glass of whiskey in each hand and gives one to his wife. "It's time, children, to play our little game of hide 'n' seek," says the Father. He does not sit down.

With dinner now lying lazily-waisted, the Great Abomination takes root in the smallest playthings. This is the place where dimly-lit imaginations rise up from the resting couches and count to one hundred by ones while the Father-Monster retreats into the all-dark hiding rooms.

Jason is the youngest of the children and decides to wait in the warmth and brightness of the living-womb in spite of the pleadings of his brother and sisters. The three eldest children assemble at the sealed end of light as they sing out "ninety-nine, one hundred!"

Beneath the bed the Monster waits and grins like a child.

Collin, the eldest, pulls open the sliding door and leans into the hallway darkness, his two petrified sisters, MaryAnn and Tabatha, clinging to the rear. With slow steps the fear is suppressed, yet the children expect anything at any moment to reach roaring around a corner and pull them in for a good whisker rasping. Eyes dazzle and sparkle deep into the creeping corners. Silently tiptoed, the ghoul-headed children assault the darkness, flinging doors agasp and poking into closet eyes.

The tug of a pantleg stops the procession. "What are we gonna do when we catch 'im?", asks a curly-headed Tabatha.

"Why, we will romp him and stomp him until he's not a Monster anymore and then we will drag him back into the light and see what we've caught," answers Collin in a brave whisper. "No Boogy Man in *here* !"

Meanwhile, the Monster has knocked over his whiskey and is sucking it out of the carpet with green monster lips.

Three empty rooms behind them and no Monster yet. So far all the pokings and Karate "Hai-Ya"s ring unanswered in the hallowed hollow rooms. The final room sits closed and reeks of Monster sweat, the doorknob still dripping ooze of a slippery sea-grip. Monster blood slowly oozes black under the door, horrorizing the threads of wall to wall, white, wool carpet.

The three children cross themselves as Collin slowly turns the knob and pushes the squeaky door into the beetled silence.

The Monster tenses, sending his claws into the carpet. The Monster heartbeat quickens as cat eyes dilate, and the breath calms into indiscernible soft-heaves.

Collin steps into the room first and allows the mineshaftblackness to surround him like a cloak. Standing in the middle of the room, Collin can barely make out what looks like a wolf skull on the dresser illuminated by the slightest glow from the Moon as it tries to pierce the thick curtains made of human hair. All children know that human hair is very hard on Monster intestines.

Turning toward the bed, Collin notices a broom that leans in the corner with the leaves from tree tops still stuck between its teeth.

"Come on, you guys, there's no monster in here. Remember, chickens don't get a Snickers," Collin says, turning with a gleam in his eyes. The Monster snickers into the carpet. Traditionally, a candy bar was given to each of the children who participated in the capture and delivery of the Monster.

The sisters, two steps up and one step back, edge in and out of the darkest of rooms with eyes that look in all directions at once. "I'll bet he's in the closet," squeeks MaryAnn in her "I'm so nervous let's just find him" voice. MaryAnn moves beside the closed closet door with Tabatha at her skirt rim and



waits for a sign from Collin. He steps in front of the door and assumes his Ready For Anything Karate pose and drops his head in signal to the knob-handed MaryAnn. She rips the door open as Collin lunges forward with his "Hai-Ya" and chops the empty closet into ragged shreds, disturbing the ghosts of a thousand moths.

Facing the empty closet, the children realize that the Monster lies somewhere behind them as they whirl about and back up to the wall.

"I bet he's under the bed chewing the heads off my teddy bears," creaks Tabatha. "We'll soon stop that," says Collin, lunging forward, chops drawn and ready. "Hai-"

**RRRRRRRRRR-A-A-A-A-A-A-A-A-A-RRRRRRRRRR**

came the sound that raises neck hairs and wets children's pants. A roar that rose like a wave of fur and fangs and came crashing down upon their meek bravery like some hundred boulders, scattering the girls like hysterical leaves beneath the ever-howling Moon. The girls run reaching and screeching down the hall as Collin guards the rear, screamless and poised all the way back to the door of light where the refrigerator sits spewing rusty warmth into the linoleum night.

Meanwhile, back in the living womb, the Mother is just about to set Goldilocks down to rest in the third bed, when she hears screams from the far bedroom. Screams that break in the distance and stomp down the hall in a lactic frenzy and fling the door open and arrive panting at the feet of the Mother and little Jason. "What 'appened?" asks Jason.

"Well, we found him," says Collin, "and he roared like a lion with a hangnail and I chopped off one of his arms and a leg with a shovel. Then he crept back under the bed to lick his wounds with Monster saliva that stops the bleeding. Oh, Jason, is he ugly! Remember the old mailman we used to have that you had all those nightmares about? Well, your old mailman could have a foot sewn on his forehead and he'd still look like a prince compared to what we've got back there."

Collin's words tumble out as he looks over his shoulder. "He's back there waiting for us and I think he's kind of mad. So there's only one thing we can do. Right girls? Let's go chop off his head and bring it back to Mom. O.K.?"

Jason's imagination runs and flies and searches out the imaginary Monster in the imaginary corners of his couch-bottomed mind. And in his mind he carries the Monster's head on a stick past crowds of envious onlookers, jealous and apprehensive in a single breath. And one cries out "What will you do with the head, Young Jason the Valiant?"

"Why, I will certainly throw it into the closet with the rest of the heads and some day I will make a fine victory soup. Why? Would someone, perchance, care to take possession of this limp-snaked head?" says Young Jason the Valiant as he swings the frowning stick into the faces of the crowd, scattering them like a school of worrisome fish.

"Let us be off then," beckons Collin. Our Monster grows stronger and remember, he's in there with your teddy bears, Tabatha. If we hurry there might be a leg left to cuddle."

The three children press into the darkness once again, the two sisters streaming at Collin's heels like terrified kites on very short strings. The screams from only minutes before lie coiled about their feet as new cries gather at the backs of their throats. The children rush to the end of the hall, compressing the silence until it oozes under the left-open-door that now stands well closed.

"Rise up! Rise up, thou sleazy bandersnatch, that we may knock you to the earth," cries Collin, turning the knob to meet the Face of Darkness. The room still Moon-wolf-erie and malignant with claws. The children slowly approach the wicked bed.

The Monster sits crouched, peering from the closed-in darkness and licks his Monster lips at the sight of three piglets freshly stumbled into his lair. He carefully sets down his empty glass and slowly rises to the top of the shadows.

"Come out, ye dirty demon, that I may count the hairs on your wretched head," Collin threatens, as he kneels in front of the bed and reaches a sacrificial arm into the darkness of the under-bed. MaryAnn and Tabatha stand watch, eyes fixed on the faint outlines of what they know to be the bedroom door and the bed. "Come on, girls, help me search under the bed - one at each end," orders Collin. The girls obey, their dark eyes trying to separate imagined demons from demons of the flesh.

The Monster now steps from the closet at the children's backs and kicks the door closed. The seemingly limbless sea-beast rocks and sways forward, moonlight on his scaley forehead. He gobbles the darkness on invisible talons as he raises his arms high over his hideous head and his glistening jowls open-

**RRRRRRRRRRR-A-A-A-A-A-A-A-A-A-RRRRRRRRRRR**

In the kitchen, Jason presses his head against the light side of the door to hear what he knows to be the grinding of bones. What scares him even more is the thought of the smell of baking bread which he knows will surely follow.



Back in the bedroom, the Monster drops upon the bed and scoops the three children out from underneath it and pulls them in close beneath his hairy chest, answering their shrill cries with his foghorn growls. The Monster then proceeds to claw and cuddle and bite and lick and just bludgeon them with kisses, raking whiskers over white, tender bellies.

Tabatha sneaks out from underneath and begins tugging at the Monster's beltloops with a "Come on, you guys!" MaryAnn, wriggling free, catches hold of the elastic band of the Monster's underwear and pulls it far up his back before letting go. Collin also wrestles free and climbs onto the Monster's back and rocks and kicks him fiercely, softly into obedience. Collin then reaches and grabs a scarf from the bed and throws it around the Father-Monster's neck for reigns.

MaryAnn and Tabatha climb up behind Collin and the three lead their captured Monster out the bedroom door and down the narrow hall to the edge of darkness where Jason stands just on the other side ready to open the door of light.

"Open the gates!" Collin cries. "'Tis I, Collin the Great, high atop the Dragon of a Thousand Deaths. Yes, he liveth and shall bring a handsome price at the Royal Zoo. Swing open! Or the wrath of the Great Conqueror shall be upon your head!"

Jason, sensing the ripeness of the moment, swings back the door and the three horror hunters parade triumphant past the refrigerator and the sink and around the corner for a victory lap around the coffee table before the beaming faces of the Mother and Jason.

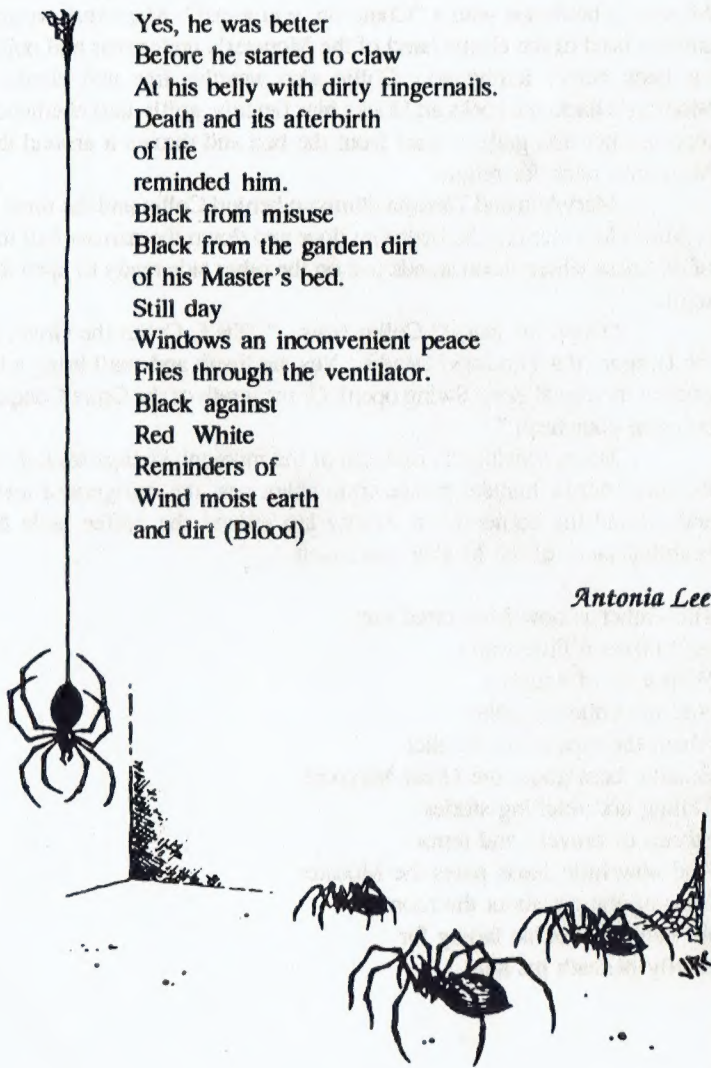
The Father is now Monstered out  
And mixes a little water  
With a lot of whiskey  
And the children gather  
About the hips of the Mother  
Ecstatic bees about the Great Maypole  
Telling and retelling stories -  
Stories of bravery and terror  
And now little Jason plays the Monster  
Chasing the cat about the room  
As Father tucks his fading fur  
Neatly beneath his shirt.



*RENFIELD,  
WHEN HIS MASTER DRACULA  
CAME TO CARFAX*

Yes, he was better  
Before he started to claw  
At his belly with dirty fingernails.  
Death and its afterbirth  
of life  
reminded him.  
Black from misuse  
Black from the garden dirt  
of his Master's bed.  
Still day  
Windows an inconvenient peace  
Flies through the ventilator.  
Black against  
Red White  
Reminders of  
Wind moist earth  
and dirt (Blood)

*Antonia Lee*





## THE BOO-HOO FOREST

by Jack Pavey

"Lock and load your weapons, we're going in!" howled Gunny over the roaring propblast of the chopper. I popped a magazine into my '16 and glanced over at Bad Boy, who was grinnin' like a Brooklyn bill collector with the goods on a wimp.

"Shit gonna fly now, Dingo ma man, oh yeah..." Bad Boy's prediction of our immediate future was cut short by the gut rending decent into the landing zone. Red dust, whipped into a frenzy by the whirling rotors, marked our next contact with mother earth. The doorgunner opened up with his M-60 and peppered the treeline, while the Huey slick lurched in low enough for us to make our ass-over-elbows exit into the scorched saw grass that ringed the last clearing before the festered, stinking chunk of jungle we called "The Boo-Hoo Forest."

Gunny, first out, took an ankle jarring, eight-foot leap out the door and did a quick paratroop roll to one side and directed traffic for the rest of the squad when the Huey set in. When the skids hit turf, we piled out.

I flopped down prone, and urged by Gunny, took up position behind a small rise. I took a last look at the chopper, which had begun building steam for its climb back to the sky and I caught the eye of the doorgunner whose shit-eating grin seemed to say "too bad, fool." I gave him the finger, and he shot me the peace sign, just as a string of slugs ripped out of the treeline, slammed into the chopper, tearing steel and striking sparks from its thin skin. The doorgunner's head exploded in a geyser of blood and bone, and his lifeless body, held in place by a safety harness, flopped like a rag doll as the Huey made a fast turn and hauled ass back to base.

Back on terra firma, things weren't going any better. We were under heavy fire from three sides and there was nowhere to hide. Dirtclods, sticks, chunks of sod and other debris were being kicked up in the air all around us by the white-hot projectiles that rained down. It was like being in a tiny cyclone that was somehow even more deadly than its big brothers.

Off to my right, Bulldog had his M-60 machinegun up on its bipod, punching short bursts into the dark forest. Tall Paul was feeding the glittering belts of ammo into Bulldog's '60 and pointing out targets. Behind me, I could just barely hear Gunny chanting into the radio, like a heathen worshipping an idol, begging for help and salvation.

Bad Boy slithered up beside me, still grinnin'.

"One of the new guys got lit up, got a suckin' chest, he ain't gonna make it." Bad Boy opened up his still smoking grenade launcher and dropped

in a 40mm frag. He balanced the barrel over his left forearm, just like a crack shot from the old west, took aim and popped it off. His target was the muzzle flash of a rifle in the shadows, and his round exploded in a red-gold ball dead center on it.

"If those bastards knew what they were doin' we'd all be in a world of hurt by now," Bad Boy hissed. "Put out some rounds down that way." He pointed out a clump of trees and dashed into the woods before I could stop him.

Jean "Bad Boy" Mars was a cajun from some backwater shack in Louisiana. He was only 16, but with the help of a forged birth certificate and a cannon fodder hungry Marine Corps, he was out here, in the Boo-Hoo Forest, saving our collective ass. He made some of the guys nervous, with his voodoo charms and hints at why he had to leave his home turf for the fun and games in Vietnam, but I was damn glad he was in our outfit, especially in times like this.

I gathered up my fire team, and we set up to rain hell on the outgrowth of trees that was targeted by Bad Boy. Bulldog and Tall Paul had found our fourth member, New Guy two, hiding in some bushes. A couple wacks on the helmet, and promise of maximum pain got him moving again. He was shaking like a puppy shitting a peach pit, but he started cranking out rounds like a man possessed.

I low-crawled back towards the rest of the squad. Gunny had found out why he did not get a response on the radio. Gunny had turned over our radio-telephone operator, who had been lying flat on the ground. Gizmo, our R.T.O., was missing most of his chest, and the round that got him had smashed the radio too.

"Bad Boy is in the trees," I yelled, tipping my head in the general direction I last saw him.

"I'll take your team off on the flank, you get Thumper's team to put down covering fire," snarled Gunny.

I found New Guy one under a bush near Thumper. His shirt was ripped open and someone had stuffed the plastic wrap from a field dressing into the gaping hole in his chest in an attempt to seal off the punctured lung. It didn't work. New guy one was dead before we could even give him a name. His sightless eyes stared straight up, and he had a smirk on his face, a smirk like he had a very special secret, and would not tell anyone.

Thumper and Pops were putting out a steady stream of small arms fire into the trees. I crawled up behind them and settled in next to Doc Stork.

"Tell 'em Bad Boy and the rest of the squad are in the trees, flanking them. Fire at that outcropping!" I pointed out the target and rolled off to one side.



Doc Stork was a tall, gangly kid from Iowa. His eyes looked huge behind his thick glasses, and his face was flushed with fear and confusion, but he snaked his way up between the riflemen and passed the word. I got myself positioned and was surprised to see a small man, dressed in black, burst from the trees with his head cocked over one shoulder as if he expected some vicious beast to give chase. I got up on one knee and stitched him up one side and down the other with the contents of a full 20 round magazine. He did a crazy dance in time with the impacting rounds, performed a graceful pirouette, then flopped down cold with his arms outstretched.

The hostile fire grew sporadic, then nonexistent, and we could hear Gunny barking commands, slightly muffled by the foliage.

Pops had lost his helmet somewhere, and his silver-gray hair was smeared with the red dust and sweat. He was the "old man" in our outfit. His hair went gray sometime during his first two tours in the 'Nam, prematurely, I guess. He was about 26 years old.

Pops started to police up the ammo and gear that was left scattered around Gizmo and the new guy while Thumper and I scanned the treeline.

"We're in the hurt locker for sure," he muttered. "No radio, two K.I.A.s, and the boogymen waitin' out in the bush for us to step in it."

"It don't mean nothin'," I lied. "We've been in worse."

"Yeah?" He looked at me with squinted eyes. "It ain't over yet."

Gunny appeared in the gloom at the forest's edge. He raised his right fist and pumped it twice. Doc Stork looked back over his shoulder at our fallen comrades, shrugged, then joined us as we filed into the Boo-Hoo Forest.

Gunny pointed out positions for Thumper and Pops, then signaled Doc Stork.

"Mars is down, see what you can do. Dingo, go with him." Gunny hooked his thumb towards a bullet-pocked tree. He looked grim, and would not meet our eyes.

I led Doc and New Guy two towards the site. I could feel my heart slamming in my chest and was scared at the prospect of finding his body all torn up and dead. Bad Boy's martial skills saved us countless times, turning back ambushes, dingin' snipers, and kickin' some serious ass whenever we needed it most. Bad Boy seemed invincible to us and if he were lost, so was the rest of the squad.

We found him curled in a fetal position in a shallow dugout between two roots. He wasn't moving, and he had a large, wet wound on the side of his head. Doc Stork crouched down and gently took Bad Boy's head in his hands and instructed us to help. New Guy two and I grabbed a hold of Bad Boy's boots and belt and the three of us got him stretched out in a clear area next to

the tree. Doc carefully probed the wound, shaking his head at the sight of the gray pulp and clear viscous fluid that oozed from it. He checked Bad Boy's jugular for some hint of a pulse, and finding none, turned away.

New Guy two came up along side me, handing me a M-79 grenade launcher and a small leather pouch that I recognized as Bad Boy's good luck charm. I dropped the grenade launcher into the dirt, and choking back a sob, placed the pouch into Bad Boy's open hand and closed his fist on it. I stood up feeling woozy, and took the new guy by the shoulder.

"You're now just New Guy," I said, "no reason to call you "two" if New Guy one's a zulu. But you gotta get your shit together, man. We need your help to get outta this. Just follow me, and do what I do, and you won't get wrecked. If we take hostile fire, point your rifle and bust caps. If you..."

I stopped in mid-sentence as New Guy reacted to something that was not in my line of vision. His eyes, already wide with fear, bugged out like twin globes and he shook like he had palsy. I turned my head to follow his stare and started shaking myself.

Bad Boy had moved his fingers.

As I watched, his eyes popped open so fast I could almost hear an audible click. He sat up from the waist, very stiffly, and began to turn his head in both directions, scanning his surroundings, much like a drunk who just woke up in a strange place and was still confused as to his location. He stopped when his eyes met mine and a huge oily grin cracked across his face.

"I feel like a new man," he stated. It did not sound like his voice. Bad Boy got up slowly and took a few wobbly steps. He looked like a sailor on a rolling deck during a storm, first lurching one way, then the other. His skin appeared mottled and his wound, which arched down from his temple to behind his ear, seemed to be glazed over. He looked past me now, with a thousand-yard stare deep into the Forest.

We were too dumbfounded to move. He had grown: taller, wider, darker. His fatigues were stretched taut over his frame, his boots looked like they were going to burst. He took a few more steps, found his balance and walked back towards the rest of the squad. He seemed to have an aura about him, a faint red glow that was more easily sensed than seen. Like moths drawn to light, we followed, not knowing what to do or say.

Bad Boy walked up to Gunny and Doc Stork, who were conferring, perhaps about him.

"Let's move, that way. Three clicks up the trail." Bad Boy gestured towards an overgrown path that I hadn't noticed earlier. Gunny and Doc just stood there, looking stunned.

Gunny regained his composure and was about to stammer a protest,



when Thumper and Pops ran up from their post near the treeline.

"Victor Charlie, coming in from across the clearing!" Thumper yelled, "There must be a whole company!"

"Move out," countered Gunny. "Single file, Dingo takes point." He then shoved me towards the trail, as if shock or fear was my problem. We turned, in unison, towards the trail, but Bad Boy was already threading his way through the bush.

We were in a triple canopy jungle, dark even on the brightest days. The broad-leafed trees soaked up all the sunlight, leaving the ground-dwelling creatures to deal with the snarl of vines and rotting vegetation in the shadows. There were birds and monkeys, who usually mocked us with squawks and calls from their posts, high in the trees.

Today, they were silent.

Bad Boy led us down the trail. He was impossibly tall, and walked with a swaggering gait that implied power and omnipotence. The squad was strung out behind him, sweating and cursing, trying to keep close, to bask in the energy that radiated in his wake. Only Gunny was unaffected, unchanged. He ran up and down the line, instructing us to keep our weapons outboard, to watch for tripwires, and barking orders:

"Godammit, yer bunchin' up, I want a five-meter spread!"

Gunny didn't understand that he, and everything else around us, the whole environment, the whole world, did not exist: Only Bad Boy; or whatever Bad Boy had become. All other influence was like a firecracker next to a nuclear bomb.

Bad Boy stopped suddenly, his feet and hips still pointing down the trail. His head and torso rotated, like he was using radar, to one side. He scanned the Forest and nodded his head, satisfied.

Gunny ran up and started jabbing Bad Boy in the chest with a thick forefinger, emphasizing each harshly whispered word.

"What the hell is goin' on here? I want you to take your place in line, now! Stay with Doc Stork until..."

Bad Boy shoved Gunny away as if he were a small nuisance and walked into the jungle, pushing through the ferns and low hanging branches.

God help us, we followed.

He plowed through the bush as if it didn't exist, the squad following in his wake. Only Gunny was unaffected by the spell that took hold of us and freed our minds from the petty concerns of mere mortal men. Fear, comfort, shelter were abstract concepts that no longer had any meaning. Something horribly beautiful was about to happen, and we communicated our thoughts with each other in short, knowing glances. Only Gunny's eyes still had the dull

gleam of an ordinary man, and before we reached the clearing, we knew his fate. We were only curious about how the conflict would take place.

Bad Boy stopped and turned around, facing us. His face and hands were crazed with cracks, like dried mud. A faint red glow issued from the fissures in his skin and his eyes were shining like hot coals. When the red-tinged light from those impossible eyes washed over us, we knew what to do.

New Guy nodded, as if responding to a spoken command, and followed Bad Boy as he bulled his way forward into the jungle. New Guy returned shortly, and spoke in a low, harsh whisper.

"Downed chopper, four dead. Charlie got there first, most of their gear is stripped."

"Marines?" asked Gunny. New Guy shook his head.

"Naw, they're Army, First Cavalry, The Black Ponies." He turned and led us to the site.

The Huey was on its side, smoke-stained from a crash-induced fire. Looking through the cracked plexiglass windshield, I saw two charred corpses heaped in the cockpit. On the far side of the small clearing was another body, its abdomen torn open, allowing swarms of flies to feast on the entrails that leaked out.

Gunny stayed at the edge of the small clearing, watching us with suspicious eyes that were pinched down tight, like coin slots on a soda machine. I joined the others who stood in a rough semi-circle around the last member of the ill-fated troupe of Black Ponies.

The dead man was propped up against a tree, and his fatigues, ripped with gunfire, were dyed black with dried blood. Stitched on one shoulder was the First Cav unit patch - a shield with a diagonal stripe and the black profile of a horse head. He had a horrible, crazy grimace frozen on his face. It looked like pain so intense, it bordered joy.

"It's Colonel Ares!" screeched New Guy. "It's Ass-kickin' Ares! I read about him in *Stars and Stripes*! He carries the same pistol his father and grandfather carried in the World Wars! Lookit! There it is!" New Guy was dancing around excitedly and pointing his finger with the same kind of emphasis common to a child's first trip to the zoo.

"It's mine now," Bad Boy said quietly. As he moved forward, straddling the dead colonel, the squad as one took a quick step back. We watched with the reverence accorded religious ceremonies as Bad Boy stooped down and picked up the hand that still clutched the big .45 automatic. He gripped the gun and gave it a twist, the rigor mortis-stiffened fingers snapping like dry twigs as he wrenched it free. He turned it over and over in his big hands, then stood and gripped it by the barrel and lifted it skyward, like



a king holding a scepter.

"Them .45 pistols been around since 1911," Bulldog said slowly, as if he were thinking out loud, rather than talking to anyone. "First World War, Second World War, Korea, and now Vietnam. The battalion armorer says that kinda gun killed more people than any other ever made." Somewhere, way back in my mind, I had an urge to look over at Bulldog, to see the source of this awe-stricken voice, but I just couldn't turn away from the astonishing spectacle before me. Bad Boy with his new voodoo charm.

"Get ready, children," Bad Boy said softly. "Our playmates are about to arrive." He gave a short quiet laugh that somehow boomed inside my head.

Tall Paul, Thumper, Pops, and Doc Stork scattered themselves in the bush around us, setting up a surprise for the enemy who we now understood to be stalking us. Bulldog and I just waited as Gunny approached Bad Boy.

"I don't know what's goin' on here," he stated cautiously, "but you better let me run this operation or there's gonna to be problems, mister." He looked down, unable to face the behemoth before him.

In response, Bad Boy jammed two of his long, fat fingers into Gunny's eyes, and finding purchase somewhere inside his skull, he spun around and flung Gunny's body, end over end, down our newly-blazed path. He had timed it to strike the first Viet-Cong that entered the perimeter, and then, all hell broke loose.

The stuccato pop of individual automatic weapons joined together to make a huge roar as each side sought to crush the other. Leaves, twigs, and vegetation rained down like camouflage confetti, clipped free by the white-hot bullets that whizzed in all directions. I didn't know, or care, if it was heightened senses, or just the darkness of the Forest, but I could see each individual round rip by, outlined by the glow of tracer ammo, Charlie's greenish, our's red-hued. The main body of enemy soldiers rushed to meet us, weapons waist high, firing in all directions. We answered their challenge, and led by the God of War, Bad Boy Mars, we waded into the fray.

I emptied a magazine into a clump of Viet Cong and was satisfied to see them shutter, fall back, and roll down the slope like deranged acrobats. Thumper took a round in the face, snapping his head back before he collapsed. Bad Boy was in the thick of it, first picking a man up and breaking his back over his knee, then slamming his huge paw into another's face, crushing it with a pop like a broken lightbulb. Tall Paul and Pops took a full charge of shrapnel from a thrown grenade and their torn bodies fell to the ground, still clutching their weapons.

The enemy was routed, and the few survivors dropped their rifles and ran. I ejected a spent magazine from my rifle, and was locking a fresh one in

place when I heard the distant thunk of a mortar expelling rounds, and before I could shout a warning, the first cluster of bombs hit the perimeter.

The steel-clad charges rained down from heaven, showering us with white-hot metal splinters that bounced and whizzed all around us, seeking soft flesh to burrow into. A chunk of shrapnel bit into my thigh, upending me and dumping me in a heap at the base of a tree. Doc Stork and Bulldog turned to help me, but an impacting round exploded at their feet, turning them to mush in a brilliant flare.

Only Bad Boy was still standing. The mortar bombs were erupting all around him, blossoming like violent golden flowers. With each flash, his body pulsed and grew. His fatigue jacket ripped at the seams and fell off him in tatters, his boots popped off like pin-stuck balloons. He shook his giant fists at the sky, in both victory and hatred. New guy was kneeling at his feet, a vicious puppy before his master.

"Help me." My voice seemed very small and quiet. "Help me."

Bad Boy, glowing with the intensity of volcanic lava, did not respond. He had feasted on the carnage he had wrought, and still hungry, stomped into the bush, looking for more. New Guy rose up and offered me a glance before he turned to follow his new god. As he blinked, his eyes flashed cherry-red, and I screamed with fear and revulsion.

I cried for my sins and the sins of my brothers. It was war, and the essence of war that is ingrained in us, spreading like a disease to the innocent. Even those of us lucky enough to walk away from this one would still be infected.

It was the last I ever saw of Bad Boy and New Guy, but I knew, even then, that they would be out there for a long, long time.

A recon patrol found me some time later, unconscious. I was miles from the clearing where it all started, and I can remember being placed on a stretcher and loaded into a medivac chopper while background voices speculated how far I might have crawled on my torn and bloodied hands and knees.

I next awoke in a hospital somewhere, to the sound of harsh whispers.

"This man is still in shock and you cannot question him until he recovers," said a woman with a silky Southern accent.

"Listen." This was a man's voice, gruff and urgent. "Eleven men went into that Forest, only one returned, and we need to know what happened, and we need to know now."

"I'll tell ya," I croaked. "I'll tell ya what happened." My eyelids felt like rust-fouled hinges that barely creaked open, and I blinked them several times to clear the blur. A nurse in a starched, white uniform stood next to a

balding man with a major's insignia on his collar. He had a small pad of paper in one hand and a pen poised in the other. I felt a wave of hysteria crash over me, and started to giggle.

"Take it easy, son. Just start at the beginning." The major started to jot some notes down as I began to laugh.

"Well, we met the enemy." I could hear my own voice increase in volume and go up an octave as I set him up for the punch line. "We met the enemy!" I howled, "AND HE IS US!" I screamed with manic glee, laughing, choking, crying, until the nurse jabbed my arm with the hypodermic and the darkness overtook me.





*FOR A NAME'S SAKE**by J. Kristensen*

This testament, I'm afraid, may be my last. Some may find the incidents leading up to this point hard to believe; some may say these are mere fanciful illusions, but be assured these events did happen. This testament will give an accurate account of what has befallen me; it is to prevent any speculation when I am found - if I am to be found.

I am Erik Matti Sorensen II, age thirty-two. I am married and work as a systems analyst. My wife, Arlene, gave birth to our first child, Erik Matti Sorensen III, only a couple days ago, so she remains at home; we thought it best for her not to make the twelve-hour trip down from Portland so soon after giving birth.

The reason I came down to my old home is to bury the last surviving ancestral member of my immediate family, my mother, who passed away the day my son was born. The funeral was a simple affair: a short church service, a eulogy given by her best friend Martha Hart, the drive to the cemetery, the last few words said over the grave, and the burying of the casket.

During the funeral I found myself without grief, nor a sense of loss; I went through the funeral and its preparations as if it were only something that I had to do. I know I should have felt grief, a sense of loss, for here I was burying my mother. She was the only person I truly loved until I met my wife; she was the woman who cared for me in my first twenty-five years; this woman was my very life and soul for so long that I was afraid of how I might act in her passing, but - I don't know why - I had nothing pulling at my heart.

I had broken down when I first received the news of her passing away. The shock had hit me hard and the subsequent drive down from Portland was a difficult one. I had not emotionally come to grips with the reality of her passing, nor with having to take care of the funeral - I was afraid I might not be able to make it through. But once I arrived at my mother's home, all my grief fell away; I was left with a callous feeling of indifference.

It was after I had lain my mother to rest and her friends had passed on their regrets when the incidents of concern began to take place. I sat alone in the library of my mother's two-story Victorian house, which has been passed down through my great-grandfather. Looking through old photo albums, I saw the photos of my youth; I saw the familiar faces of my late uncles and aunts with people I did not know; I saw the pictures of my grandparents holding me when I was a child; I saw my great-grandparents, Erik, my namesake who had disappeared shortly after my grandfather's birth, with his wife Martha. Viewing all the photos compounded the conscious reality of my solitary state.

Setting the photo album down, I stared into the brick fireplace and watched as the flames danced and acted out the childhood I had spent in this house: the time I broke my arm falling down the stairs, the countless times my friends had slept over, all the people that ritually came over for the holidays, and the times spent with my mother and father. I saw them all flicker in the flames and drift away in the smoke.

It was about six o'clock when, after half a bottle of brandy, an empty feeling, as if my heart was being stripped clean, began to wash over me. The callous disregard that had consumed me earlier was scraped away, leaving me empty. I desired companionship, but I had no friends I could call on. I had talked to my wife over the phone earlier, but what I longed for was someone to talk to *here*. There was nobody. All I had in this town were my deceased relatives.

I did not know why I decided to go to the cemetery. Maybe it was because I expected that something there would fill the void; maybe that which was wrenched from me was in that cemetery. Whatever it was, I decided that going there would do me good. Anything was better than sitting here in isolation.

I drove the five miles to the cemetery while the setting sun ignited the clouds with red, orange, and yellow, colors that screamed out against the darkening blue sky. Pulling my car through the two white pillars at the front gate, I negotiate my way towards the northwest corner. Driving along the narrow and winding roadway, I noticed that the waning sunlight seemed to have set the graveyard alive with shadows.

I pulled the car to a halt and got out. After pocketing the keys, I proceeded to walk the hundred yards to my mother's grave. I kept asking myself why on earth was I here. I had only hours ago buried her and now I was again in the middle of this graveyard. It did not make sense to me, but then the empty feeling that had consumed me seemed to tell me that it was here where I would find that which was scraped from me.

I walked past the markers of others: Warren Walters, Mary and Joseph Baker; past the tombstones of children taken from their parents before they had a chance to commit a sin; past the gravestones of people long ago buried and forgotten. I soon came into sight of my mother's final resting place and saw that something was wrong. I quickened my pace. There was a mound of fresh earth. Had my mother's grave been dug up?

I stopped and saw that it had not been disturbed. I let out a sigh and looked to see where this fresh dirt had come from. There, next to her grave, was one freshly dug. Why was it here? Would the cemetery workers dig a grave the day before? It bewildered me.

I looked up to see if anybody was around, but no, I was alone. The cemetery had taken on a forbidding look in the sun's final moments. A sudden chill came over me - a feeling that said escaping from its grasp would be futile.

A breeze picked up, setting the oak trees to whine with each breath the wind sighed; it set the weak and dead leaves floating gently down to land on the ground or slap against the cold marble of tombstones. The five acres of cemetery seemed to come alive each time a breeze rolled in. Yet underneath this illusion of life, one could feel death crying in agony.

I soon got a feeling I was being watched from behind. I turned around and saw, next to a tree, an austere looking figure dressed in black. I was not able to make out his visage at first, but as he moved on towards me, I was soon able to discern his facial features. He was about six-feet-four and thin; his skin was of a sweaty, glossy yellow hue; his lips were crimson and small; his sunken eyes were red with black, lifeless irises set in them.

"Well, hello Erik," he said in a booming voice that rolled out of his throat. "I've been waiting to meet you." I could not believe it. Nobody knew that I was coming here. How did he know I would be here, and who was he?

"You look a little stunned."

"Who are you?" I asked, feeling defensive about this man disturbing me at my mother's grave.

"Let us just say, a friend."

"What do you want?"

"Relax. I will tell you why I have come. It has to do with an agreement that your great-grandfather and I made."

"My great-grandfather? Are you serious?"

"Yes. Very much so. It all started back when your great-grandfather was twenty. Like most young people- -even like today's - he wanted power and respect.

"I came to him one evening offering the power and respect he so desired. At first he declined my offer, but he soon found that I could give him what he wanted. So on that night, we sealed our agreement in the midst of witnesses.

"I agreed to provide my services unto him for twelve years. I gave him the ability to call up storms, to inflict injury with a look, to use potions, and a guarantee of no bodily harm within the agreed time frame. In return, he was to give me his body and soul for the rest of eternity.

I stood there paralyzed in disbelief. Was he serious?

"I upheld my portion of the contract," he continued. Whenever he so desired, I gave him a rope tied with three knots which, when untied, would call up a storm and raise it into a tempest; I gave him the ability of the evil eye; I



gave him the knowledge of roots and herbs, and in their use, thus providing him with the skill to produce any desired effect; I protected him against mortal harm and even against the accusations that could have had him sentenced to death. I gave him all that I said I would.

"I showed up at his home after those twelve years, to collect what was rightfully mine, but found him gone. I searched six months, until I found him, here.

"I drew him to this very cemetery - much the way I drew you here tonight - and took that which he had promised me; I set his body aflame, and once it was completely consumed, I extracted his soul.

"Now I have come to claim you as mine, for you, too, owe me your body and soul."

Anger instantly arose in me. "What do you mean I owe you?" I demanded.

"Erik Matti Sorensen signed a contract, but broke it by running from me. Because he broke that contract, I invoked my right to extend my claim on your great-grandfather to include all descendants of his who are his namesake.

"That is why you owe me."

I was dumb struck. This was absurd. Surely he did not expect me to believe him. I looked at him and saw that this was not a practical joke; he was as serious as one could be. Suddenly I realized that in time he would be coming for my son. I had to do something. But what? I was not armed and I certainly could not kill him with my bare hands. All I could do was to weakly mumble,

"My son."

"Yes, your son," he answered with a grin, stepping towards me.

I do not know where I found the energy and the will power, but I ran towards my car. I ran as fast I could, not daring to look back. But then, I heard his booming voice, as if it was there beside me, laugh and say, "Do not run Erik. I have a grave here for you. Oh well, so be it. I will have you, Erik. Your great-grandfather could not escape me, nor can you."

Once I reached my car, I fished out the keys from my pocket and fumbled for the right one. Finding it, I jumped in, started it up, and stepped on the gas. I did not care about driving over the graves or tombstones, all I wanted was to be away from him.

I pulled into the driveway of my mother's house and quickly ran inside, locking the door behind me. At last I was safe. I went over to the front window, parted the curtains, and peered out into the night. I saw a hearse slowly pull up.

It was then that I knew I must write this statement.

God, no! All for a name's sake?



## A MODERN EQUIVALENT

by Paul O. Williams

As Seymour Blake set down his tray on the formica cafeteria table, from old habit he swept the room with a comprehensive glance. His eyes paused on the carnelian necklace of a young secretary. Her collar spread wide, and he noted the pulse tic of her throat. His glance lay on it a few moments - then he flicked his look away.

Staring briefly out the big front window at the Washington, D.C. twilight, he saw a man looking in at him. He dropped his eyes and seated himself, carefully arranging his black top coat, then his knife, fork, and napkin, not looking up.

The man came in and shuffled slowly to the cafeteria line. Blake glanced up at him twice, then watched his progress in the reflection of a framed picture on the wall near his table. It was a bucolic scene of people on a furiously sunlit beach. Blake found it offensive.

What he saw reflected was a gap in the line of weary diners, and an orange tray moving along as though by itself. Momentarily he blanched and again took in the room. As he had recalled, it had no mirrors. He sighed quietly.

The man in line was tall and spare. He wore a dark suit, a dark tie with red polka dots, a blue shirt with ruby cuff links, and a single onyx ring. His clothing looked old and slightly threadbare, and his skin, his deep-sunk eyes, and his thin hair somehow seemed to match it.

Blake concentrated on his ham salad, picking at it carefully. Outside, the traffic thinned out as the end of the winter rush hour approached. In spite of his stature, Blake attempted to shrink down, to be absolutely still and inconspicuous.

Yet he was not surprised to see a grayish hand slide an orange tray onto the table across from him. The tray held a blood rare hamburger splayed out on half a bun, heaped with ketchup, and a glass of red wine. Blake glanced up. The man flashed a quick smile showing long canine teeth. "Ham salad for breakfast? Huh. How you've slipped, Seymour. How long has it been?"

"It was 1812 on the field after Borodino."

"That long?"

"That long. You were stooping over a wounded Russian soldier as I recall."

"Helping him."

"Helping yourself," said Blake with a sniff.

"The wounds would have been fatal anyway. I could feel him yearning for death," the man replied.

Blake shrugged and picked at his lettuce. "They didn't listen. I asked for it plain, they gave me onion," he murmured. "It didn't seem sporting of you," he continued.

The man set down his fork and stared at Blake intently. "Seymour, you've got to help me. How do you continue? You must have found a way."

"I have."

"You seem to have prospered. But...ham salad?"

Blake smiled slightly, keeping his mouth shut.

"I'm tired of derelicts," the man continued in a whisper. "There's too much bad wine in them, and all kinds of drugs. Last week something made me so wildly dizzy I was still out on the street near sunrise."

"You mean you no longer attract damsels? You can't force their windows?"

"After these centuries? With their crammed sensual gullets? They're so full of gratifications, I don't sense a wisp of yearning. Stuffed with all the bonbons of life."

Blake nodded slightly with a quiet chuckle.

"Some way I've got to get back across the ocean. And what about AIDS? What will that do to us?"

"Perhaps it will improve our immune system."

"Please, Seymour. Try to be serious. After all this time, don't pull the rich cousin act on me."

Blake suddenly did become serious. "All right. I learned something valuable from the Victorians. Sublimation. If you can't get what you want, get an equivalent." He raised a long forefinger to emphasize his point. "Blood isn't a necessity after all. It is what blood means to us we want, Alphonse. The need to prey on things. The stalk, the fierce capture, the enveloping of the victim. The weakening struggles in our vice-grip. The letting go." He paused for a sip of wine. "Of course I haven't given up blood entirely. It is a habit after all this time, wouldn't you say? But you simply have to find an equivalent. A more modern way. Even we have to adjust."

"How? Here? In Washington?"

Blake raised his hand. "I have a job. I work. Very hard." He leaned forward, a sudden smile gleaming. "And I'm very good at what I do," he added quietly.

"But the sunlight, Seymour. The sunlight."

Blake shrugged. "Ah, dear Alphonse. That may be avoided in the corridors of power. And now with computer links I work almost always at home. I can pick my time. This is, as you said, breakfast. I'm acknowledged to be the best. No one escapes me. I can find corruption where there is none. And unlike my compatriots, I don't make constant blunders. I don't refer



people to phone numbers that don't exist and give them wrong information." He smiled again. Then, fiercely, he said, "I nail them."

"Stop being mysterious, please. I appeal to you..."

Blake held up a hand. "Isn't mystery our essence?" he asked. "All right. It's sublimation, as I said. The equivalent society offers. Fortunately, we fit the type. I chase down the cheaters, the erroneous returns, the financial anomalies. The fulfillment is very, very great. But I don't know if you'd have the taste for it."

Alphonse stared at him. "Even I'd like a more settled...existence. It's been a long time to be furtive. Cloaks are out of style," he said, resigned.

"You'd have to take a civil service exam."

"Civil...what?"

Blake suddenly got up and took out his wallet. "My job calls," he murmured. "I need to log on. Think about it. Get some papers in order. Call me after you've done your musing. It takes a specialist - one who can feel the quarry out there in the dark, trembling. And I can get you on." He offered a glittering smile. "But think hard first. I don't want to make a mistake in you. I have to go. Don't follow me, please."

He handed Alphonse Schwartz a card and strode away, his spear-straight back accentuating his height. Alphonse put on his glasses and squinted at the white flair of paper. He frowned. "Internal Revenue," he muttered. He thought a moment, looked startled, and said aloud, "Even for us that seems so...evil. 'Find corruption where there is none?'" He stood suddenly and stared out at the night, but Seymour Blake was gone.



**VAMPIRE DEREGULATION**

or

**We Have Met the Vampires, and They Are Us**

by David M. Van Becker

A few years ago, every kid on the block knew all about vampires - how to detect them with mirrors, how to repulse them with garlic and crucifixes, how to kill them with stakes through the heart, and above all, how to imitate Lugosi's lilting Hungarian accent and misquote Dracula to say, "I vant to suck your blood."

But a child starting out today, even if he/she first learned numbers from the Count on *SESAME STREET*, would have a whole new breed of the Undead to deal with - vampires have been deregulated, and the old rules developed from Dracula no longer apply. The vampire can now be seen in the mirror, but his image shows us also a picture of our own lives.

Since "the eclipse of horror fiction" that Stephen King sees in the years 1940-1965, and perhaps because vampires had become so popular and stereotyped, writers have ignored much of the old tradition and given the Undead new freedom. Near the beginning of Anne Rice's *Interview With The Vampire*, the boy reporter asks the vampire narrator Louis about crosses and stakes through the heart, and Louis puts him straight: "That is, how would you say it today...bullshit?"

I've looked at several vampire novels from the '70s/'80s and found the new Undead far different from those of the past. The new vampires are still strange, immortal, and mostly nocturnal creatures, but they are far closer to ordinary humans. The current generation of Undead shows America's concerns about appearance and social relations, sexual pleasure, urban violence, loneliness and death. It used to be that you couldn't see a vampire in the mirror. Now perhaps the vampire itself mirrors modern American society.

**HEROIC VAMPIRES**

The most striking thing about the new vampires is that they are the heroes of the stories, sometimes the storytellers as well, and are on stage most of the time. So we're naturally close to these creatures, and are often stuck between sympathy and horror. Isn't this feeling of ambivalence toward the vampire hero a lot like the ambivalence we sometimes feel about our jobs, our society, and ourselves? The endings of these novels don't give us any help either, for the new Undead are not usually burned up or staked, as they would be in a traditional story - the new vampires really do live happily ever after, except a few in traditional novels like King's *Salem's Lot*.

## ORDINARY VAMPIRES

The new vampires act a lot like ordinary people, and some would even call them yuppies. Most of them are young - that is, young when they became Undead - the average age of Rice's characters in the three Chronicles of the Vampires is about twenty-five. Some of them act pretty adolescent, like the vampire heroine of L.A. Freed's *Blood Thirst* and Rice's Lestat, who is called the "brat prince."

Many of the new vampires want to live just like the rest of us, have human friends or servants, live in tract houses or secluded mansions, drive Jaguars or Mercedes or four-wheel drives, breed roses or racehorses, take food to poor people, or manage a business - fitting in is the best disguise. The most adapted vampire is Professor Weyland, hero of Suzy McKee Charnas' impressive novel, *The Vampire Tapestry* (1980), who out-publishes his colleagues and attracts students and grants for sleep research.

Professor Weyland and several other new vampires can stand the daylight, and many have clever ways to meet their special needs. Chelsea Quinn Yarbro's vampire hero Saint-Germain has a thin layer of his native soil built into his shoe soles and into the floor of his carriage so he may endure daylight, cross water, and sleep in transit as he does in *Hotel Transylvania*. Others wear makeup or contact lenses to look human, have sealed rooms for daytime, construct hidden sleeping compartments in their RVs, or surround themselves with mirrors to confuse the superstitious.

Beyond their adaptation to everyday life, the new vampires are attractive in small, charming, beautiful, or humorous ways. Rice's 5-year-old vampire Claudia's gorgeous China doll looks are wonderfully balanced by her childish savagery in *Interview With The Vampire*. Even the ruthless and beautiful Miriam in Whitley Strieber's *The Hunger* is pitiful when her antique rose garden is destroyed. Rice's Lestat is theatrical, humorous, and charming, a self-described devil; he loves his mother so much he makes her a vampire to save her life. Old Elijah in *Blood Thirst* is a kindly Uncle Remus, initiating the heroine into vampire life and buying her new clothes. The same novel reaches the low of vampire cuteness when one of the characters has a car with a little yellow sign that says, "Vampire on Board." These new vampires clearly show "the peculiar combination of menace and triviality" which has been described as "the emotional tone of life in the late '80s."

## CLOTHES MAKE THE VAMPIRE

Attractiveness and charm are hunting skills for the new as for the old vampires, and like Lugosi's Count, they are dressed to kill. Yarbro's Saint Germain is the most consistently charming, well-dressed vampire of them all; he is described in period costumes from Roman times to the present. T h e



vampire narrator of *Blood Thirst* gets a new outfit every evening when she wakes up, and she describes every one of them. Throughout her Vampire Chronicles, Rice uses descriptions of dress to show both the disguises and the individuality of her heroes, but the striking feature of her portrait of the vampire is the face and body, "utterly white and smooth, as if...sculpted from bleached bone." Thus the stress on clothing and looks in so many current vampire novels makes the Undead more like us, shows our hangup with appearances, and confuses the issue of good and evil.

The high fashion dress of the new vampires shows us that the new Undead are really social animals. The new vampires live within human society and participate in human culture: Rice's vampires run a theater and her Claudia plays Mozart; Charnas' Weyland goes to the opera; all of them read a lot at night. But in most of the novels I surveyed, the heroes are more concerned with the society of other vampires, whom they can distinguish at long distances - part of their telepathic power.

Like other predators they have territories and act like rulers, but they have conferences to settle disputes and plan actions. In George R.R. Martin's *Fevre Dream*, a vampire leader emerges who has developed a synthetic blood substitute and wants to make his nation kinder and gentler. This goal is achieved, but only after a final bloodbath. Perhaps so they won't stand out too much, most vampire societies locate in exotic settings: Mississippi steamboats or plantations, Parisian theatres, motorcycle gangs, and heavy metal rock bands. Within the novel, the most recent of Rice's Chronicles was written on a computer in a vampire community villa on an island in Biscayne Bay.

## SEX AND THE SINGLE VAMPIRE

For the modern vamps, sex is a lot different than it was in *Dracula*, and much closer to our own views. In *Dracula*, the few vampire scenes are seen from a victim's viewpoint and are full of sexual fear and guilt. Jonathan Harker is guilty (yet eager) about wanting Dracula's ladies to bite his neck, and Mina Harker, after she is forced to drink the Count's blood, is horrified and calls herself "Unclean! Unclean!"

In most of the current novels, sex is now seen from the vampire's viewpoint, and it is conscious and guilt-free. For the more scientific vampires, sex is only a means to tempt victims. There should be no "mixing up dinner with sex," as Charnas' Weyland observes. For the restrained and romantic Saint-Germain, vampirism is an intimacy far deeper than sexuality. But for many of the new vampires, blood-drinking goes beyond sexuality to produce power and to achieve total communication and a kind of god-like state.

Current novels have about three or four times as many scenes of vampirism as *Dracula*, and these are described with much more explicit

emotional sexual detail. Here is one good example: in *The Vampire Lestat*, Lestat is attacked by a highwayman in his first outing as a vampire:

"...This was a hard yound body. Even the roughness of his badly shaven beard tantalized me, and I loved the strength in his hands as he struck at me...He froze as I sank my teeth into the artery, and when the blood came it was pure voluptuousness. In fact it was so exquisite that I forgot completely about drawing away before the heart stopped.....And there was only warmth after, and obviously increasing strength...And for a little while I stood there, feeling gluttonous and murderous, just wanting to kill so the ecstasy would go on forever...gradually I grew calm and changed somewhat. A desolate feeling came over me. An aloneness...I couldn't understand it, except that the drinking had been so intimate."

In this scene, Lestat (and the reader) has it all: lust, violence, sex, food, victory, power, and finally loneliness.

### POWER TO THE VAMPIRE

Vampire action in the new novels happens in three ways. First are attacks such as Lestat's above, usually on criminals, prostitutes, or other "bad guys" in the novel. The larger second group has willing or unconscious victims held by the vampire's power. In most of these there's sexual intimacy and pleasure, especially for the vampire, and the victim usually does not die. Last are the Dark Gifts, the blood exchanges which create or unite vampires; these come at a climax of stories and result in super states of power and immortality.

Beyond their heightened sexuality, the new vampire heroes are supercreatures, faster than the eye, far stronger than any mortal, telepathic and thought-controlling, able finally to conquer time and space, as did Lestat when he travels from Miami to London in moments. The vampires achieve in full what some people say they feel like when they take mind-altering drugs like LSD or cocaine. Such feelings are pleasurable, and we're ready not to worry about the fact that these feelings are powered by somebody else's blood.

Besides, as we have seen, the superhero is like us in so many ordinary, touching, and humorous ways. We share the vampire's superiority: knowing our hero, we watch Professor Weyland talk dryly about his sex life to a shocked therapist, "Would you mate with your livestock?" And Count Saint-Germain charms his airliner seatmate and asks her to dinner, except that she doesn't know she will be the main course.

### ONLY THE LONELY

The vampire's power comes from blood and death, and he pays for it in knowledge and loneliness. We observe and hear about Dracula's isolation

at second hand, but the new vampires constantly remind us of their loneliness: It's the most common vampire emotion. Like the old vampires, the new heroes are isolated because they live forever on human blood.

This leads to the main moral problem of the new vampire fiction. How can hunting and killing be inevitable and regrettable, evil pleasurable, necessary and painful at the same time? In *Vampire Tapestry* we get the victim's perspective in young Mark's thoughts: "To have someone spring on you like a tiger and suck your blood with savage and single-minded intensity - how could anyone imagine that was sexy? He would never forget that moment of blinding fear." Most attack vampirism is like street crime, and in the new novels we usually see it from the rapist or murderer's point of view. The scene of horror fiction has moved from country to city, reflecting the realities of our daily lives.

Vampire blood lust and killing are taken to an extreme near the middle of Rice's *Queen of the Damned*, after Lestat's union with the vampire goddess. He and the Queen embark on an orgy of killing, first at the temple of the blood god Azim, then in the primitive villages where the Queen begins her plan to save the world from war by killing all the men. Back at the palace after "this sinister odyssey", Lestat tells us, "...I looked into the mirror...and tried to find my humanity in what I was seeing." What he sees is that he is losing himself as a person. He is a "bleached...marble...Priapus" with a useless organ, a "human expression" and only a few lines still left on his face.

To live Undead with death the new vampires must ignore their own killings or forget with years of sleep, thus blocking out their human connections and the grief they can bring. The vampire's immortality is the last wish fulfillment, happiness in the lonely crowd, free from sorrow and a human past.

The modern vampire fulfills all our wonton wishes. He turns our isolation into a biological necessity. He converts our desire for pleasure into total sexual freedom and violence. He takes our urban fear and yearning for security and makes it unlimited destructiveness.

### TO SEE OURSELVES...

In the story "The Spider Glass," Saint-Germain constructs a mirror and builds into the glass itself a picture visible only to those who cast no reflection. Others look in the mirror and see themselves, but the hero sees a jeweled, blood-red spider, an image of his nature.

Indeed, as modern American readers, we now see the vampire in the fictional mirror, but if we look closely at the glass, we can see the reality of ourselves.















